

8135.C.19
K

A D D R E S S
FROM THE
Society of United Irishmen of Dublin,
TO THE
People of Ireland.

*Couched in moderate Language, containing STRONG
and UNANSWERABLE FACTS, which demon-
strate the Necessity of a*

PARLIAMENTARY REFORM,

WITH

A P L A N

**FOR AN EQUAL REPRESENTATION OF THE PEOPLE OF
IRELAND IN THE HOUSE OF COMMONS.**

*This Address contains Sentiments that should be IMPRESSED
DAILY on the Minds of a PEOPLE who wish to be
FREE.*

To be had at the Constitutional Coffee Room,
No. 3, NEW COMPTON STREET, SOHO.



A D D R E S S
FROM THE
UNITED IRISHMEN OF DUBLIN,
TO
THE PEOPLE OF IRELAND.

WE submitted to your consideration such a Plan for your Equal Representation, as would, in our Judgement, if carried into effect, give you your just and constitutional weight in the Legislature.—We exulted in the thought that our exertions had contributed to raise the public mind to that elevated point, from which it might view its widely extended rights ; from which it might discover the real insignificance of every proposal towards Reform, that should not seek the full measure of justice; which should not give to all, who were in any degree bound by the Law. the power of chusing those who made the Law We thought the simplicity of the Plan the best Test of its honesty, and that its appeal to the common sense of the Nation rendered any explanation of its principles unnecessary. We are, however, now called upon to justify its primary principle, by the objections which have since been raised against it ; and should we succeed, our triumph must be that of argument over invective, of Reason over Prejudice, and of Justice over Power.

It is an apprehension with some, that should every man be allowed to vote for a Representative in Parliament, the Monarchy and the Aristocracy of the Constitution would soon be overborne and destroyed, by the exorbitant Power and Republican Spirit of the Democracy. Let it be remembered, that the British Constitution has amply provided against the probability of such an event. It has appointed a sole executive officer, invested with prerogatives to strengthen that executive Power, and with a certain portion of Legislative Authority to defend those Prerogatives. It has instituted a substantial Aristocracy, not deriving all its weight and authority merely from the King's Patents, but hereditary, and possessing

possessing a mass of property, by which, backed and supported, if necessary, by the Executive Prerogatives and Legislative Authority of the Crown, it is enabled to withstand the attacks of the Democracy, Away then with this idle apprehension ; can any danger attack upon so much influence and so much Power ? On the contrary, can any thing short of pure DEMOCRACY maintain against them the Integrity and Independence of the House of Commons ?

But it is said that the lower classes of the Community, being without property, have no stake in the Country, and therefore ought not to vote for any part of the Legislature: In consequence of the representative system every man is supposed to be, either individually or by his Delegate, a party to making the Laws, by which he is to be bound: * The Elective Right cannot therefore be denied on Constitutional Principle to any one ; and even the poorest should be allowed the exercise of that Right, as they are bound by law as well as others, Laws operate on LIFE, LIBERTY, and PROPERTY. Why his property represented ? Because it is valuable to the Possessor, and may be affected by Law. Why should Liberty and Life not be represented ? Are they not more valuable to their possessor, and may they not also be affected by the Law ? Since Liberty and Life are the most important objects of Legislation, the poorest class have a right to some controul over the Legislature, and it is just that they should exercise it. The Spirit of many of our

Laws

* Altho' this is at present only a supposition, yet there are strong reasons for believing it was once a fact.—Mr. Prynne, one of the most profound legal Antiquarians, asserts, that before the 8th Hen. 6th, ch. 7, every Inhabitant and Commoner in each County had a voice in the election of Knights whether he were a Freeholder or not. “ Brev. Parl. Red. p. 187.—Of the same opinion seems Whitelocke. 2d Whitl. p. 90.—It seems very considerably confirmed by the words of the 7th, Hen. 4. ch. 15 —And Sir Thomas Smyth, in his Commonwealth, p. 7 has the following words: “every Englishman is intended to be present in Parliament, either in person, or by Procuration, or Attorney, of what pre-eminence, state, dignity, or quality soever he be, from the Prince to the LOWEST person in England, and the consent of the Parliament is taken to be every man’s consent,

Laws is Aristocratic, and by no means calculated for the protection of the Poor. To pass over the remarkable instances of the Game Laws and the Samp Act, the latter of which, by operating on legal proceedings, shuts the door of Justice against the Poor, we shall refer to a much more important system, our *Criminal Code*. If the lower classes of the Community had been represented in Parliament when their necessities first urged them to insurrection and outrage, under the denomination of White Boys and Defenders, Parliament would have enquired into, and redressed their grievances, instead of making Laws to punish them with Death. The Acts, which are prohibited by many of our Laws, are unquestionably great crimes : but the punishments, inflicted by those Laws are still greater crimes. The reason of this disproportion is, that the Rich man is never guilty of Sheep-stealing, and the Poor man has no one to plead his cause in the Senate,

If however, it be a principle that no man, who does not contribute to the support of Government, should be mediately or immediately concerned in Legislation, such principle would be no exclusion of the Poor, for they contribute in proportion to their means: The poorest man in the land pays Taxes for his Fire, his Candle, for his Potatoes and his Cloathing ; and the poorer he is, the greater occasion he has for a vote to protect what little he has, which is necessary not to his qualification merely, but to his very existence, He has a property in his Labour, and in the value it will bring in the Market, the Field, or the Manufactory: a Property, on account of it's smallness, of more real value to him than Thousands of Pounds to the Rich and Luxurious: a Property, which must render him more interested in the honest disposal of the Public money, since one additional Tax may crush him, than those can be who receive that Public Money by virtue of PLACES without employment, and PENSIONS without merit. Property is merely the collection of Labour: possesses the very same qualities before, as after it is collected into a heap ; and the scattered labour of the lowest ranks is as real, and ought to be as really represented

sented as the most fixed and solid Property, Reason, we think, says this, and sad experience has manifested, that giving Political Power exclusively to property collected, not to the mass of Living Labour, has been in all ages, and particularly in Modern Times, the true cause of Feudality, of Vassalage, and of Aristocratic Despotism.

It is also used as an argument, that although in theory every man has a right to vote, yet the exercise of that right among us would be impracticable, or attended with outrage from the multitude of Voters. To that we answer, that the practicability of the measure depends on a few regulations, which we apprehend, could be easily contrived to render elections practicable and tranquil. Let their be a division of the Kingdom into parts, sufficiently small, and as nearly as possible equal with respect to population, and let the several elections annually commence and conclude throughout the Kingdom on one and the same day.

Some friends to universal suffrage in a new country, urge a local objection to its being applied to Ireland. They say that the lower classes of people in this country are peculiarly unfit for the exercise of Suffrage, on account of their extreme ignorance. We know of no description of people unsuit for the exercise of their rights: and if we did, we would fit them for it by giving it to them. What has made those classes so extremely ignorant? The privation of those rights, which, if enjoyed, would have procured them knowledge. Apply the reverse of that, which has debased, and it will exalt them. Give them the elective franchise, and let them exercise it directly. It is not just to judge of what the people would be, when embodied into the Constitution of their Country, from their present state of debasement, in which they feel themselves unconnected with it. We trust that our countrymen, even the poorest, who are now stigmatized with the appellations of *Swine, Wretches and Rabble*, would, if restored to their Rights, evince an elevation of Sentiment, which, setting every species of corruption at defiance, must humble the pride of Wealth, by the superior lustre of virtuous POVERTY.

Indeed

Indeed the local circumstances, seem to us rather in favour of introducing it into Ireland. We have lately had occasion, in considering the Catholic claims, to examine into the foundations of Government. The Catholic has taught all Ireland, that to be taxed or legislated for, without being represented, is an oppression, which sinks the sufferer into a *SLAVE*. He insisted on his right to the elective suffrage, because he was bound by the Laws, and contributed to the expences of the State. The doctrine once broached, can never be forgotten ; and the remaining Slave, whom reform shall not have raised to the rank of Citizen, will remember the argument of the Catholic, and ask himself “ am I not “ bound by the Laws : and do I not in my humble sphere “ contribute to the expences of the State ? Why am I not “ represented ? Is it not my right : and shall I not insist up-“ on my right ?” Sooner or later the measure must come. The eternal principle of Justice will be repeated in louder and louder tones, until at length it must be heard and observed. Why then not now ? Why leave behind a source of new reforms, perhaps of convulsions ? If reform only communicates power to a greater number, and do not give liberty to all, it will only strengthen the ruling, and weaken the oppressed body ; so that when the Slave shall have acquired sufficient courage to speak, the obstinacy of the Citizen will compel him to act. We cannot forget the language made use of to intimidate the Catholic from prosecuting his claims, and that those very claims shortly after having been rejected with scorn, were admitted with respect. The same line of Prudence and Wisdom will, we are persuaded, be pursued in the case of REFORM, whenever convincing proof of the public Sentiment shall be received on that Subject, and the kingdom by the restoration of Universal Suffrage be delivered over to uninterrupted PEACE and HAPPINESS.

Contemplating this grateful prospect, we smile with much internal satisfaction, on hearing those intemperate and abusive expressions, which the Members of Opposition make use of against this Society. We smile at their inability to conceal

conceal the vexation and disappointment they have felt on finding themselves forsaking by the People. That people, whose Majesty they insult, but whose forbearance they at the same time solicit—on finding themselves falling, like the ostentatious Balloon, from that height to which they had risen by a sort of inflammable levity, and there sustained solely by the breath of popular favour---We smile at the curious coalition of political parties against our Society—to see them club all their Wisdom and their Wit, to manifest to the whole Country that we are really formidable---but we are rather inclined to pity than forced Fraternity, that monstrous conjuction, which in spite of the horror of instinct, and the antipathy of Nature, can join in one common effort the highest Genius with the lowest Ribaldry---How great must be the panic that can unite such extremes? We can bear as we have borne the common place invective against this Society; but we feel some indignation, when he, who should look on himself as the purchased Property of the People; to whose fortune every man, even "*the Beggar on the Bridge;*" has contributed, whom the "*the shouts of the mob*" have raised to the hight of his fame. When such a man inveighs against armed Beggary and Shabby Sedition, we cannot but remember a time, when the usual adjunct to his own Name was "*Shabby and Seditious incendiary.*" It is not manly, it is not decorous to deal out this contumelious language against the great mass of mankind. The use of contemptuous terms disposes to contemptuous treatment, and those, whom we villify as mob we soon learn to slight as men. It is the unequal partition of Rights, and what results from this, the arrogance of Power, and the abasement of Poverty, which make mob, instigate to tumult, and good to insurrection. If the People were respected, they would reverence the constituted authorities; but to gain this respect they must possess those RIGHTS, which are the Prerogative of their Nature, and the worth of Manhood.

Opposition seem surprized that the People should view their debates with indifference. We will tell them the rea-

son,

It is because nothing passes of a nature to animate and interest that People---nothing, from which an individual can promise himself more Happiness, or the Community more Splendour----it is because enthusiasm no longer lights up every countenance, and swells every heart with something great and good, and with a prospect of something greater and better---it is because there appears no internal spring of action, no fixture of character; but good and bad qualities, as it were, external, and neither virtues nor vices their own. It is because once in seven years the PEOPLE are treated as MAJESTY, and in the interval maltreated as MOB.

We have not in our Plan of Reform paled in little park^s of Aristocracy. Our Plan has not been described with a pair of compasses, nor have we defaced with childish circles, the system of Nature, and the Chart of the Constitution. There is no truth in any political system, in which the Sun of Liberty is not placed in the Centre, with knowledge to enlighten, and Benevolence to warm and invigorate; with the same ray to gild the Palace and illuminate the Cottage. The Earth moves, said Galileo, and the Sun stands still. He was imprisoned for the heretical assertion; for a Libel against the Laws of Nature, and for exciting Sedition among the Stars. But the Earth moves notwithstanding; and in Spite of Fire, Imprisonment, Pillory and Transportation, the RIGHTS OF MAN are the immovable Centre of the British Constitution, that has hitherto regulated Times and determined Revolutions.



A P L A N,
 FOR AN EQUAL REPRESENTATION OF THE
 PEOPLE OF IRELAND IN THE HOUSE OF COM-
 MONS.

*Prepared for the Public Consideration by the Society of
 United Irishmen of Dublin.*



1. That the Nation, for the Purpose of Representation solely, should be divided into 300 Electorates, formed by combination of Parishes, and as nearly as possible equal in point of Population.
2. That each Electorate should return one Representative to Parliament.
3. That each Electorate should, for the convenience of carrying on the Elections at the same time, be subdivided into a sufficient number of parts.
4. That there shall be a returning Officer for each Electorate, and a deputy returning Officer for each Subdivision, to be respectively elected.
5. That the Electors of the Electorate should vote, each in the Sub-division in which he is registered, and has resided as herein after specified.
6. That the returning Officers of the Sub-divisions should severally return their respective Polls to the returning Officer of the Electorate, who should lot up the whole, and return the Person having a majority of votes, as the Representative in Parliament.
7. That every Man possessing the Right of Suffrage for a Representative in parliament, should exercise it in his own person only.
8. That no person should have a right to vote in more than one Electorate at the same Election.
9. That every male, of sound mind, who has attained the full age of 21 years, and actually dwelt, or maintained a family establishment in any Electorate for six months of the twelve, immediately previous to the commencement of the Election, (provided his residence, or maintaining a family establishment, be duly registered) should be intitled to vote for the Representative of the Electorate.

10. That there shall be a Registering Officer, and a Registry of Residence in every Sub-division of each Electorate; and that in all questions concerning Residence, the Registry should be considered as conclusive evidence.
11. That all Elections in the Nation should commence and close on the same day.
12. That the votes of all Electors shall be given by Voice and not by Ballot.
13. That no oath of any kind should be taken by any Elector.
14. That the full age of 25 years should be a necessary qualification to entitle any man to be a Representative.
15. That Residence within the Electorate should not, but that Residence within the Kingdom shold be a necessary qualification for a Representative.
16. That no Property Qualification should be necessary to entitle any man to be a Representative.
17. That any Person having a Pension, or holding a Place in the Executive or Judicial Departments, should be thereby disqualified from being a Represenitive.
18. That Representatives should receive a reasonable sti-pend for their services.
19. That every Representative should, on taking his Seat, swear that neither he, nor any person to promote his Interest, with his Privity, gave or was to give any Bribe for the Suffrage of any Vote.
20. That any Representative convicted by a Jury, of having acted contrary to the substance of the above Oath, should be for ever disqualified from sitting or voting in Parliament.
21. That Parliaments should be annual.
22. That a Representative should be at liberty to resign his Deligation upon given sufficient notice to his Constituents.
23. That the absence from duty fo should vacate the seat of a Representative.

THE

*The Society of United Irishmen of Dublin to the
PEOPLE OF IRELAND.*

People of Ireland,

We now submit to your consideration, a plan for your equal representation in the House of Commons, In framing it we have disregarded the many over-charged accusations, which we hear daily made by the prejudiced and corrupt, against the People, their independence, integrity, and understanding. We are ourselves, *but a portion of the People*; and that appellation, we feel, confers more real honour and importance, than can in *these times*, be derived from PLACES PENSIONS, or TITLES. As little have we consulted the sentiments of Administration or of Opposition, We have attentively observed them both, and, what ever we may hope of some members of the latter, we firmly believe that both those parties are equally averse from the measure of adequate REFORM. If we had no other reason for that opinion, the plan laid before the Parliament, in the last session, under the auspices of Opposition, might convince us of the melancholy truth. Thus circumstanced, then, distrusting all Parties, we hold it the right and the duty of every Man in the Nation, to examine, deliberate, and decide for himself on that important measure, *As a portion of the People* (for in no other capacity, we again repeat it, do we presume to address you) we suggest to our ideas, by which we would provide to preserve the popular part of the Legislature uninfluenced by, and independent of the other two parts, and to effectuate that essential principle of Justice and of our Constitution, that every Man has the right of voting, through the medium of his Representative, for the law by which he is bound: that sacred principle, for which America fought, and by which Ireland was emancipated from British supremacy! If our ideas are right; which we feel an honest conviction they are, ADOPT THEM; if wrong, discussion will detect their errors, and we at least, shall be always found ready to profit by, and conform ourselves to the sentiments of the People.

Our present state of representation is charged with being unequal, unjust, and by no means calculated to express your deliberate will, on any subject of general importance. We have endeavoured to point out the remedies of those evils, by a more equal distribution of political power and liberty ; by doing justice ; and by anxiously providing that your deliberate will shall be, at all times, accurately expressed in your own branch of the Legislature. If these are not the principles of good government, we have yet to learn from the Placemen and Pensioners that sit about the Castle, in what the science of Politics can consist. But we know they are, and we are bold to say, that the more a government carries these principles into effect, the nearer it approaches to perfection.

We believe it will be said that our plan, however just, is impracticable in the present state of this Country. If any part of that impracticability should be supposed to result from the interested resistance of borough-proprietors, although we never will consent to compromise the *Public Right*, yet we, for our parts, might not hesitate to purchase the *Public Peace* by an adequate compensation. At all events, it rests with you, Countrymen, not with us, to remove the objection. If you do not wish the accomplishment of such a REFORM, it will not take place ; if you do, we cannot believe that Ireland is *yet* sunk to that state of mis-government, in which it may be truly said, that although the great body of the People seriously determined on its attainment, it is nevertheless impracticable.

To you, among our Countrymen, for whose welfare we have peculiarly laboured from the first moment of our institution, and the contemplation of whose prosperity will more than compensate us for the sufferings we may have endured, for the calumnies with which we are aspersed, and for those which the publication of this unpalarable plan will call down upon us ; To you the poorer classes of the Community we now address ourselves. We are told you are ignorant ; we wish you to enjoy LIBERTY, without, which no People was ever enlightened : we are told you are

are uneducated and immoral ; we wish you to be educated, and your morality improved, by the most rapid of all instructors A GOOD GOVERNMENT. Do you find yourselves sunk in poverty and wretchedness ? Are you overloaded with burdens, you are but little able to bear ? Do you feel many grievances, which it would be tedious and might be *unsafe* to mention ? Believe us, they can all be redressed by such a reform as will give YOU your just proportion of influence in the Legislature, AND BY SUCH A MEASURE ONLY. To that, therefore, we wish to rivet all your attention. Let those Men, who wrangle about preserving or acquiring power, catch at popularity by their petty regulations to check the progress of these growing evils ; do you deliberate, in the retirement of your own hearts, upon their only adequate remedy. Desist, we entreat you, from those disturbances, which are disgrace to your country, and an injury to yourselves, which impair your own strength, and impead your own cause, Examine, *peaceable and attentively*, the plan of Reform we now submit to you. Consider *Does it propose to do You justice ? Does it propose to give You sufficient protection ?* For we have no fears but the Rich will have justice done them, and will be always sufficiently protected. Hang this plan up in your Cabins ; think on it over and over again ; do not throw it by in despair, as being impossible to be carried into effect ; FOR NOTHING, WE HOPE, IS IMPOSSIBLE THAT IS JUST.

6 JU 62



